

PEOPLE and THINGS: By ATTICUS

ON Wednesday night the Crush Bar behind the Grand Tier at Covent Garden lived up to its name. Snaking one's way foot by foot, through the glittering jungle was a rare opportunity to study the culture snob in full cry.

Especially in the first interval, when the strangely old-fashioned impact of Russian ballet had not yet been absorbed, it was fascinating to hear the 90 per cent. of sheep trying to extract "the right thing to say" from the 10 per cent. of shepherds.

Crackling Thorns

HERE are some selected droppings from the gilded eaves.

"What do you think? Douglas Cooper says the scenery's



DAVID WEBSTER

terrible. . . . It's nothing but a gigantic pantomime. It isn't ballet, it's Russian folk art. . . . It's terrible fun and I wish we could get away from modern abstractions and go back to fairy stories. . . . They ought to put David Webster in charge of Suez. . . . They say that K. Clark's ecstatic about the whole thing. . . . Ulanova dances better with her arms than her legs. I wish I'd seen her twenty years ago. . . . I wonder what she dances on? Margot does it on two spoonfuls of glucose. Margot's the greatest of them all. . . . I'm told there's a greater one in Moscow.

Ulanova insisted on leaving her behind. . . . That's typical of ballet gossip. . . . I don't think much of the dresses. Rather non-U. . . . That Page to Paris is the only pretty girl. . . . All the small parts are wonderful. Watch those two beggars. . . . I swear the fat nurse is Nina. . . . Nonsense, you know all those women athletes are men. . . . I don't think much of Ulanova's make-up. . . . The Russians use flour for powder and beetroot juice for rouge. . . . Rot! . . . There's Freddie. He'll give us the U-line."

Man of the Hour

BY common accord, David Webster, the fifty-four-year-old Scot who is General Administrator of Covent Garden, was the hero of the occasion.

It was he who last March went to Moscow and arranged the visit of the Bolshoi company. It was he who supervised the months of careful preparation, and it is principally thanks to him that the curtain rose on Wednesday.

But most admired is the iron nerve he showed during the two weeks of crisis, and the calm and sage optimism of his public announcements.

Strong Soup

ONE Russophili in the Crush Bar was wearing a red bowtie with his dinner jacket. My own gesture of Anglo-Soviet solidarity was to drink a vodka and tonic in the interval.

The vodka craze has not hit England with the same force as it has hit America. There, vodka has sharply affected gin sales—not that that matters, as they are both manufactured by the same companies.

Vodka has caught on because it is believed to be a purer spirit than gin. It sounds more exotic and it does not linger on the breath.

Vodka drinks include the

"Bloody Mary" with tomato juice and Worcester Sauce, and the "Screwdriver," with lime juice.

The tinned soup manufacturers have just had a vodka windfall. One company's advertisements suggested pouring

ing their beef broth on ice glass, ice cubes, beef broth and vodka.

"Soup on the Rocks," adding "Take it straight—or experiment a bit."

The soup drinkers duly experimented and came up with a "Bullshot"—roomy

and slangs the wine and food and members of "Blank's" where he spent a miserable September.

Most of the refurbishing of his club will have been of the "make-and-mend" variety. Boodles, architecturally the most beautiful club in London, if not in the world, has painted its elegant façade and has done up its dining room in cream, with wine-red curtains.

Whites has only needed to wipe a year's dust off the gleaming barrel ceiling of clubland's most gorgeous dining room, refitted last year, but the Turf has shampooed the whole of its exterior and new paint gleams everywhere within. The Travellers, too, has replaced the Duke of Bedford's Rooms, Van Dyck and Canaletto with a number of monumental portraits from the Portarlington estate.

The New Look

Not all such changes are for the better. At the Athenaeum, for instance, feeling has run hot and deep at the new look of the Coffee Room. Decimus Burton's original browns and golds, which had stood unchallenged since the club was first built, have given place to an indeterminate pastel colour ("curate's egg green" is one name for it) and many members feel that the room has become more suitable for afternoon tea with dainty gateaux than for robust conversation and port.

At the St. James's, too, members will receive something of an aesthetic shock when the club reopens tomorrow. Their distinguished member, Mr. Osbert Lancaster, was given a free hand by the committee, with results, to a modern eye, both spectacular and harmonious.

It would be a shame to blunt the full impact, so I will only report that the staircase is now in three shades of grey and the recess at its base is in flame red.

Where Art Thou?

A FRIEND who has just returned from seeing "Nude With Violin," which he greatly enjoyed, in Dublin, is still haunted by the memory of Mr. Noël Coward being paged in the Shelbourne Hotel.

There, as I also recall it, your name is not called. It is sung in a melancholy chant.

My friend compares the sound to the first few bars of "Happy Birthday To You" sung as a psalmody.

The sad cry which, in Mr. Coward's case, exquisitely

underlined the diæresis over Noël, again and again made the hair rise on my friend's neck.

"It was," he says, "as though an unending queue of blithely spirits was waiting on Mr. Coward's pleasure in the lounge."

"But yet it moves . . ."

A FIRST night that I shall be sorry to miss is that of Bertolt Brecht's last play, now scheduled for December at his own theatre, the Schiffbauerdamm in East Berlin.

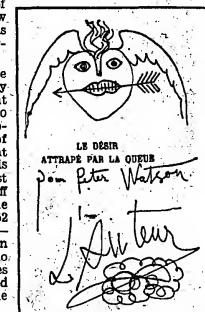
Galileo is its hero; and the great astronomer's legendary "Eppur si muove . . ." might be applied as much to the preliminaries for its production as to the habits of the terrestrial globe. Brecht was never hasty in his methods; and when I was last in Berlin a member of his staff was introduced to me with the words, "He came here in 1952 to see 'Galileo' through and—well, he's still here." (In Hollywood, where things no doubt move faster, Mr. Charles Laughton has already appeared in a stage production of the play.)

Persistent Shade

THE shade of Peter Watson still hangs about London, like that of a more sensible Prince Florizel of Bohemia. It is in his name, for instance, that we are to hear at the Wigmore Hall on October 16, three of those masterpieces of modern music that have a way of not figuring on commercial programmes. Watson had the gift—rarer, than is usually supposed—of knowing what is,

and what is not, a work of genius.

The quality that marks out the Bartók, the Stravinsky, and Schönberg's Serenade, op. 24, from the welter of contemporary rubbish may be discerned also in the selection from Peter Watson's library, to be sold at Sotheby's on October 29. The Spender and Connolly items are all that one would expect from the founder of "Horizon"; and I imagine that many readers will envy, as I do, the friendship with Picasso which led to the



dedication, which I reproduce here in full, of Picasso's only published play.

Par-Figure

THE Democrats are trying to capture the "golfing vote" from the Eisenhower camp.

The latest Democratic campaign sticker says: "BEN HOGAN FOR PRESIDENT" and below, in smaller letters, "If you must elect a golfer, elect a good one."